DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 456 431 CS 217 300

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TITLE English and Its Neighbors: A Position Paper.
PUB DATE 1995-07-00
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Conference of the International Federation for the Teaching of English (6th, New York, NY, July 10-14, 1995). Presented with Group 8: English and Its Neighbors.
AVAILABLE FROM For full text: http://www.nyu.edu/education/teachlearn/ifte/tulas.htm.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Bilingual Education; Communication Problems; Cultural Context; Elementary Secondary Education; *English; English Only Movement; Higher Education; *Language Role; *Second Language Learning
IDENTIFIERS Native Language; *Power; *World English

ABSTRACT

Despite the fact that the majority of the world's population speaks mother tongues other than English, about a third of their number use English as a second or an alternative official or commercial language. English is also the language of available information, of international communication (such as air- and sea-speak), and of computer "empires." Bilingual or bidialectic education enables those with other languages or dialects of the same language to function at different levels of transaction, political and managerial on the one hand, and the everyday communication of equals on the other. But power still resides with the speakers of the majority language which had achieved that position precisely because of power previously acquired. Often these are speakers of English--particularly when their language is used for transnational communication. Speakers of mother tongue English must relate closely to teachers and learners of English as a second language, which can become complicated when both are educated together in one of the increasingly more multilingual classrooms. Giving recognition to the foreign official or home languages is necessary if the general development of speakers of the other languages is not to suffer by being deprived of the support of their mother tongue at a crucial time in their education. The mistake is to assume that all speakers of English possess the same command of the language and that their intellectual and emotional faculties function entirely through the medium of English. (NKA)

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ED 456 431

Date: 5 June 1995
Group 8:
English And Its Neighbors

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A Position Paper

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The Position of English--its Varieties and Functions

A) The position of English vis a vis all over languages may be likened to mat of a lion amidst lambs, taking account of both its size and its strength. Despite the fact that the majority of the world's population speaks mother tongues other than English, about a third of their number use English as a second or as an alternative official or commercial language. With 80 percent of all information available in English and the various internationally recognized languages of communication such as air-and sea-speak constructed on a predominantly English base, this position is not likely to change unless there is a radical shift in the world political and economic order. Meanwhile computer empires continue to be built on and with English. Russian which at least in the Communist world until the end of the 1980s had aspired to a similar role, albeit minus the computers, never achieved the appeal of English as a necessary nor indeed as a desirable commodity.

To be sure the English that is the dominant version in the world languages league is the American version so that attempts to insist on the adoption of a British-based English standard are likely to be confined to a more regional use. Though the European Union itself may show some preference for the British version in its political and business transactions this is not likely to be the Standard much discussed in the United Kingdom (Hayhoe/Parker 1994). Moreover there is the ever present American influence in Europe which can only grow stronger in a Europe which is divided.

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Language and Power

This argument can be summed up by the concept of language and power taken at a level much higher than that widely accepted in everyday discourse or classroom interaction, with speakers modifying their utterances when speaking to people assumed to require a different sort of language (Chomsky 1988). Here Language and Power is at the very center of power politics and socio-economic influence.

There are at least five considerations arising from this state of affairs:

(1) The need for a version of English which can serve as the language of international communication. This calls for improved language skills but it need not, except at the highest levels where exact communication is expected, require a version of English that is identical the world over. In any case, agreeing on such a version would be difficult since different versions of English as mother tongues would be as difficult to dislodge as would other mother tongue languages.

(2) The implications of this are that those who wish to take part in international business increasingly have to be bilingual in command of: a) Another Language and English, or, b) A Variety of English and internationally accepted English, with English a kind of modern "koine."

(3) The only speakers who may, mistakenly as it turns out, be thought not to require this skill are those of the established versions of English such as mother tongue English in the United Kingdom, speakers, mainly in Europe, of the British variety of English as a foreign language and in overseas territories closely linked with Britain, such as Australia, as mother tongue. Their position is stronger than that of other mother tongue speakers but the fact remains that these languages, widely spoken or not, resist the dominance of English. As the general world standard becomes more akin to American in vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation, the differences between any two varieties of English can be more significant in some cases than in others (Baron 1990; see also <F> below).

(4) **The burden bourne by world language speakers**: This is the recognition of the privilege that the command of a world language imposes. Those who are at home with it have a better chance to formulate their thoughts and responses in what is their language, always assuming that the agendas will also be formulated in the same medium.

(5) This involves English speakers' responsibility to give the speakers of other languages the chance to express their thoughts. Listening at international meetings open to nationals of more than one country confirms that there are those with different mother longues who require more time to

absorb the thoughts of others and in turn to express their own thoughts in the majority language of the conference--usually English. It is important for speakers of English to make allowance for this in everything they say in a multilingual context. They not only have to give extra time for other speakers to make their views heard but to be capable themselves of fully comprehending what the others are trying to say. International negotiations each fail because of the misunderstandings that arise, a fact not given enough attention when assessing the success of meetings. Even internationally current terms may mean subtly different things in the reality of different societies. Speakers of the majority language often appear to be cleverer than those whose mother tongue is not the medium of discussion. English speakers operating at the higher levels of communication must be educated to practice a kind of bilinguality, such as language awareness <see: C>

Implications for Interlanguage Relations: What Is to Be Done?

B) Bilingual or bidialectic education enables those with other languages or dialects of the same language to function at different levels of transaction, political, and managerial on the one hand, and the everyday communication of equals on the other. However, the power still resides with the speakers of the majority language which had achieved that position precisely because of power previously accrued. Often these are speakers of English. This is particularly so when their language is used for transnational communication. Since language is also the expression of identity and the tool of that side of human creativity which requires a communication where international concerns are less to the fore, but which is usually best formulated in that native language, there are three further considerations.

(1) In the multicultural situation of most of the modem world it is necessary to accept multilingualism to account for the complexity of identities. Insistence on the exclusive identity, if we confine ourselves to language identity only, precludes communication or at least can make it difficult. In many cultures the unknown language is often dismissed as strange. Paradoxically this is where world language speakers are in the same boat as speakers of the lesser languages, the difference being that majority language speakers may feel less need for the services and information expressed in the minority language than minority speakers in the reverse process. Acknowledging the power wielded by the majority and the responsibility that goes with being in possession of it are important.

(2) The importance of bilingual education (dialect speakers usually receive instruction in the official language) is obvious. This is different from the bilingualism or bidialectism that most speakers slip into unaware: using dialect, slang, and other variants of language, many limited to a local constituency.

(3) **The pressure on minority bilinguals**: While the advantages of bilingualism, such as the ability to function in more than one system, are usually extolled, the complex multilingualism experienced by most recent arrivals in a foreign country, frequently one where a version of English is spoken, and by many born in that country continuing to speak their own official or home language, can be a burden. In such circumstances immigrants are often exposed to several language pressures at once. Trying to preserve their language and to acquire another may bring them into conflict with various identity interests calling for different priorities: some more obviously linguistic with the language generation gap between young and old immigrants. some more religious in nature, for example involving a language of religion.

Relations with Non-English Speakers and Learners

C) Speakers of mother tongue English must relate closely to teachers and learners of English as a second language or foreign language to do justice to these concerns: one person's mother tongue, in this case English can be another's foreign language. This gets complicated when they are both educated together in one of the increasingly more multilingual classrooms (Corson 1993 and Paulston 1988 and 1992). Giving due recognition to the foreign official or home languages is necessary if the general development of speakers of the other languages is not to suffer by their being deprived of the support of the presence of their own mother tongue at a crucial time in their education (Bullock 1970)

(1) **Linguistic sensitivity**: Here the consideration is accepting the need for practicing linguistic sensitivity, usually by English speakers, towards those speaking other languages. This is the language side of the responsibility referred to earlier <see A 5> which calls for an awareness of language which concerns itself with the way a language is acquired and which extends linguistic sensitivity to the non-English speakers be they in a numerical majority or minority situation. It attempts to make sympathetic sense of what others are saying. Because it can be assumed that many English speakers will have less of a motivation actively to learn to speak a foreign language, language awareness will introduce them to the language problems encountered by others when using English as well as their own language problems when trying to communicate with them. The process of "educated listening" to make mutual comprehension possible may take less time than it takes to learn another language. It is moreover often the case that language awareness proves to be an incentive to learn another language. The social benefit of language awareness is that it not only helps with the language skills of one's own native language but that it reduces the impact of the linguistic arrogance of the monoglot speaker. This phenomenon also occurs with speakers of languages other than English (Tulasiewick 1994). The Kingman Report on English (DES 1988) actually suggested that learners of

different languages might learn "language" together in mixed study groups. Teachers have been recommended to be language aware (van Lier 1995), a suggestion also made by Kingman for teachers in training.

Language Education and Links With Other Subjects

D) The language specialists' role is important in that il helps in the process of learning language skills enriching it by expertise acquired from reading, listening, and other specialisms which can also make the process of learning easier. For reasons mentioned earlier <C> the collaboration with foreign language teachers is useful, especially when they are also practitioners of language awareness, able to pinpoint and compare cases of how language works and how it is acquired and learned. The cumulative effect leads to an interest in language and provides a language education (as opposed to literature) in both mother tongue and foreign language which caters for learners' cognitive, affective, aesthetic, and somatic concerns.

(1) Consideration of the relation of English to other subjects is crucial. After the National Curriculum debate in England all teachers have to pay attention to the use of Standard English by their pupils. This concern must go beyond the rote learning of grammar. It is the teachers of other subjects who can show the various uses to which language can be put and it is they who with their specialist knowledge can demonstrate the phenomena of language change (lexical meanings), language and power (with reference to social studies), and the language of art (as in drama), to name but some. A rapprochement of this nature, practiced in many schools and colleges, leads to a more profound knowledge of one's own as well as other languages. Going beyond the repetitive correction of mistakes opens up new language and culture vistas which can include a variety of stimuli, including language games.

Protecting Other Languages

E) Good, sensitive teachers that is those who are aware of the linguistic life maps of their pupils (LINC project. DES 1990/1) and make appropriate use of the information provided, encourage reference to dialects and languages in the classroom not only in periods set aside for this but also during English language (and other) lessons when it is obvious that a reference to the pupils' home language can make comprehension easier or that it can raise minority speakers' morale thus helping their development. Such language awareness and sensitivity approaches protect English and other languages. The actual practice varying according to country and educational policy. In some German *Laender* it is possible for examination questions to be repeated in the student's own language if the use of their mofher tongue is shown to be in the candidate's interest. This is not the case in England (Tulasiewicz 1995). Unlike language awareness the direct teaching of foreign and ethnic languages has never been the English teacher's job.

The Implications of English Only

F) Considering the response to movements like "English ONLY" takes us back to the starting remarks of this paper. These movements are on the increase. Even after putting the overtly racist sentiments of same of them and the various undertones of nationalistic chauvinism beyond the pale there are the views of those who while advocating efficiency and rapidity in communication point out the obvious fact of the widespread use and availability of English. They forget the problems arising from a lack of understanding when The speakers' English skills are unequal to the task resulting in incomplete communication and the serious consequences of negotiations breaking down. These arise not only because of the inferior language skills of many of the non-English mother tongue speakers, which after all, it is claimed, they can easily learn, but of the inability to share another language because of the English speakers' lack of sensitivity to comprehend the full extent of the meaning of the other speakers' utterances. The plea in the *London Daily Mail* earlier this year advocating the introduction of English as the language to be used in Europe is itself a mixture of the chauvinism and efficiency mentioned.

The mistake is to assume that all speakers of English possess the same command of the language and that their intellectual and emotional faculties function entirely through the medium of English. There are after all not only different versions of English mother tongues (here the difficulties may be less severe) but thousands of other languages many of which are widely spoken where the difficulties are greater. Communication in language must take note of the language and cognition nexus and the dangers of the exclusive identity which makes human relations, cultural and intercultural, fraught with problems

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